

Message Text

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ACTION SNM-05

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2903

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 2581

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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, AS
SUBJECT: ALLEGED STATE RESTRICTION OF DEA

REF: STATE 83084

1. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, THERE ARE NO RPT NO RESIDENT DEA PERSONNEL IN AUSTRALIA. ALTHOUGH DEA HAS FROM TIME TO TIME INVESTIGATED IN A LOW KEY MANNER THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSIGNING A RESIDENT AGENT HERE, THE IDEA HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABANDONED, AS MUCH FROM DEA'S OWN ASSESSMENT OF THE LOCAL SITUATION AS FROM EMBASSY'S ADVICE THAT A RESULT OF FIERCE PRIDE IN BEING ABLE TO "DO THEIR OWN THING" ON PART OF STATE AND FEDERAL DRUG ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES, A RESIDENT DEA AGENT COULD ONLY SERVE IN A LIAISON ROLE; WHICH JOB THEN AND NOW BEING EFFECTIVELY FILLED BY STAFF OF EMBASSY NARCOTICS COORDINATOR. ALTHOUGH EMBASSY CONSISTENTLY ADVISED AGAINST NEED TO ASSIGN DEA AGENT TO AUSTRALIA, THIS WAS ALWAYS DONE AT THE INFORMAL PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION STAGE AND COULD BY NO STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION BE CONSIDERED AS "RESTRAINING" DEA, INASMUCH AS DEA ALWAYS CAME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION FOLLOWING ITS OWN INVESTIGATION.

2. FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS NOW EMBASSY NARCOTICS COORDINATOR'S OFFICE HAS SERVED AS A DIRECT AND EFFICIENT CHANNEL OF
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COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN DEA OFFICES IN THE U.S. AND THE FIELD AND THE AUSTRALIAN NARCOTICS BUREAU (NOW FEDERAL BUREAU OF NARCOTICS (FBN)). INCOMING AND OUTGOING OPERATIONAL AND OTHER CABLES ARE PROCESSED PROMPTLY, WITH FBN EVEN EMPLOYING APPROVED STATE TELEGRAPHIC FORMAT WHICH ELIMINATES NEED TO RETYPE IN NARCOTICS COORDINATOR'S OFFICE.

3. INDEED, HARVEY BATES, COMMISSIONER, FBN RECENTLY TOLD THE THEN-ACTING NARCOTICS COORDINATOR THAT CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATIONS WERE SO SMOOTH THAT HE DELIBERATELY CHOSE TO GO THROUGH EMBASSY ON A RECENT NON-OPERATIONAL MATTER OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE AND DELICACY RATHER THAN GO THROUGH THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, WHICH WOULD HAVE ASKED ALL SORTS OF QUESTIONS AND THEN WOULD HAVE HAD TO OPEN COMPLETELY NEW CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH DEA WASHINGTON.

4. BOTH DEPARTMENT AND DEA HAVE BEN MOST HELPFUL IN ASSISTING FBN OFFICIALS VISIT U.S. FOR TRAINING AND CONSULTATIONS. MOST OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE WAS RECENT VISIT OF HARVEY BATES HIMSELF. BATES MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT HIS TRIP AND HAS ALREADY SENT TWO DETAILED FOLLOW-UP CABLES TO DEA ADMINISTRATOR BENSINGER.

5. IN SIMILAR CONNECTION, EMBASSY HAS ALWAYS ENJOYED FULL AND ENTHUSIASTIC COOPERATION OF FBN IN ARRANGING TRIPS TO AUSTRALIA OF VISITING DEA OFFICIALS.

6. IN SUM, IT IS EMBASSY VIEW THAT CURRENT THREE-WAY RELATIONSHIP COULD NOT BE BETTER.
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